



**Psychology Department  
PSY 250, Music, Mind, and Message  
Unit Outline, 1<sup>st</sup> Semester, 2011**

**Unit convenor: Prof Bill Thompson  
Taught by several instructors**

Students should read this unit outline carefully at the start of semester, as it contains important information. If anything is unclear, please consult the course convenor.

**ABOUT THIS UNIT**

- Unit description and rationale

The music industry is among the largest worldwide and music is a pervasive part of our lives. We turn on music while driving, we listen to music at parties, bars, and restaurants, we dance to music, shop to music, sing in the shower, and attend concerts. Yet the psychological and social significance of this aspect of our lives is not widely understood. The goal of *Music, Mind and Message* is to expose students to the psychological and semiotic dimensions of music in every day experience. The course will examine current psychological research on music, and explore the social significance of music using a semiotic approach. By the end of the course, students will have an understanding of the cognitive and emotional implications of music, and will have the semiotic skills to critically analyse the layers of significance associated with a range of musical genres, from hop-hop and heavy metal, to opera and chamber music.

Prerequisites: 24 credit points  
PSY250 is worth 3 credit points.

***It is University policy that the University issued email account is used for official University communication. Students are required to access their account frequently.***

**Lectures: Thursdays 1-3 E7B 100**

**Tutorials: Wednesdays 11, 12, 1 or 2 pm Y3A 223  
Students must enrol in one tutorial hour only**

## TEACHING STAFF

### Course chair and lecturer

Prof Bill Thompson Dept Psychology

### Course teaching staff

Prof Bill Thompson: Lecturer and convenor

Kirk Olsen: Guest Lecturer (PhD Candidate in Psychology)

Lena Quinto: Guest Lecturer (PhD Candidate in Psychology)

Jamie Berry: Guest Lecturer (PhD Candidate in Psychology)

### Tutorial / practical coordinator

Brent Keogh (PhD candidate in music)

Students must enrol in one of the following tutorial hours on Wednesday in Y3A room 223: (a) 11:00 – 12:00; (b) 12:00 – 1:00; (c) 1:00 – 2:00 (d) 2:00 – 3:00

## CLASSES

- Thirteen weeks: 12 x 2-hour lecture + 2-hour practical / tutorial; 1 Midterm test; 1 Final Exam (date to be announced)

## REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND/OR MATERIALS

- **Required Readings:**
- Thompson, W.F. (2009). *Music, Thought, and Feeling: Understanding the Psychology of Music*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Available from the bookstore)
- Course kit: selected reading from:
  - Tagg, P. *Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music*. 2001. Available at: <http://www.tagg.org/xpdfs/semiotug.pdf> and on Blackboard.
  - Theo van Leeuwen's "Speech, Music, Sound" (Paperback: ISBN 0-333-64289-9).
  - *Music Therapy* handout
- **Supplementary recommended reading:**
- Levitin, D. *This Is Your Brain On Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*. 2006. Atlantic Publisher.
- **Additional resources:**
- *Brief video lectures on selected topics:* Links provided on Blackboard

- Selected readings available as background for practical

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY**

- Lectures are held Thursday 1-3 pm in E7B 100. They will address material covered in the readings but will also go beyond the readings.
- Students must enrol in one of the tutorial / practical times. The purpose of the tutorials / practicals is to help students complete their audio-visual project, and to provide basic assistance with course content. Additional information about the tutorial / practicals will be provided in the first lecture.
- The group audio-visual project provides you with an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills you have acquired throughout the semester in an original, creative product. To enable the creation of a high-quality end product you will work in small groups whereby each group member specializes in a particular area of the audio-visual production. Such specialisation mirrors creative industries in the real world.
- Students are expected to complete readings prior to attending the lecture, and they are expected to participate in class discussions.

#### **UNIT WEB PAGE**

- The web page for this unit can be found at: <http://learn.mq.edu.au>

**The week-by-week list of topics is as follows:**

Week and Lecturer	Date	Topic	Reading
1 Bill Thompson	Feb 24	Introduction & evolutionary origins of music	THOMPSON Chapter 2
2 Bill Thompson	March 3	Music acquisition in infants and children	THOMPSON: selected sections from Chapter 3 & 4
3 Bill Thompson	March 10	Using semiotics to understand music	Course kit
4	March 17	Midterm test on weeks 1 - 3	
5 Bill Thompson	March 24	Understanding musical signs	Course kit
6 Bill Thompson	March 31	Music perception and memory	THOMPSON: selected sections from Chapter 5
7 Kirk Olsen	April 7	Emotion and music I	THOMPSON: selected sections from Chapter 6
8 Kirk Olsen	April 28	Emotion and music II	THOMPSON: selected sections from Chapter 6
9 Jamie Berry	May 5	Music Therapy	Course kit
10	May 12	Unpacking musical messages	Course kit
11 Lena Quinto	May 19	Creating music	THOMPSON: Selected from Chapters 8 & 9
12 Bill Thompson	May 26	Music and other abilities	THOMPSON: Selected sections from Chapter 10
13 Bill Thompson	June 2	Putting music mind & message together	No additional reading assigned

## ASSESSMENT

Assessment will consist of a midterm test, a group audio-visual project, a write-up of that project, and a final examination. The midterm test and examination will be based on readings and lectures. Details are as follows:

### **1. Midterm test: 20%**

- The midterm test is a 45-minute multiple-choice examination that will be held in week 4. The test assesses your understanding of lecture topics and reading materials in weeks 2 and 3 only, providing a low-risk means of evaluating your potential early in the course.

### **2. Group audio-visual project: 30%**

- The Group Audio-Visual Project provides students with an opportunity to apply skills and knowledge they have gained in the unit in a creative group task. Each student is assigned a particular role within the group and is marked for their contribution in that role. The project is due in week 12.

### **3. Individual write-up of group project: 10%**

- This assessment task provides students with the opportunity to reflect on their group project, to identify strengths and weakness of group members. Although the audio-visual project is completed in groups, the write up must be your own individual work and is due in week 13 *at the tutorial*.

### **4. Examination: 40%**

- A three-hour examination comprised of short-answer and multiple-choice answer questions. The examination provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their breadth of knowledge. All unit material is examinable. It provides a final summative assessment of the students' understanding of unit content and their ability to apply that knowledge.

*Students are expected to attend all classes.*

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course students will

1. Have drawn on their personal experience of engaging with music (as consumer, performer, teacher, etc) to develop their understanding of how humans think, feel and communicate with each other;
2. Have an understanding of music as a multimodal communicative (semiotic) practice;
3. Have an understanding of human capacities of perception, memory, affect, mutual understanding and co-operation, which underpin musical expression and appreciation;
4. Have a general understanding of how music from different cultures and different historical periods has varied, and how this variation forms part of the changing cultural and psychological context of human societies

5. Be able to use key concepts from linguistics and psychology to describe different kinds of music in terms of the symbolic resources that are drawn on to achieve each piece/song's purpose as a communicative event;
6. For text-based music, explain how key features of the language (in lyrics) reflect or resonate with – or sometimes set up oppositions with –key features of the music itself - in particular they will be able to note how structures in the textual mode often change at the same time as there is a major change in a crucial aspect of the musical mode.

The above learning outcomes will lead to the following graduate capabilities:

- *Knowledge and skill in the study of music psychology and semiotics*
- *Increased ability at critical, analytical and integrative thinking*
- *An ethical awareness of scientific practice and cultural differences*

### **POLICY ON STUDENTS WHO MISS AN EXAM**

**MID-SEMESTER EXAMS:** All students must attend the mid-semester exam at the same time. There is no separate arrangement for evening students to sit this exam.

Students who are unable to sit the mid-semester exam at the specified time must advise the Psychology Office via email and must also submit an Application for Special Consideration form (and Professional Authority if reason is medical, clearly stating the reasons for the absence from the exam). The form is available outside the Psychology office or can be downloaded from

<http://www.reg.mq.edu.au/Forms/APScons.pdf>

This should be submitted to the Student Enquiry Services as soon as possible with a copy to Psychology Office in C3A334. The unit chair(s) will determine eligibility for a late mid-semester exam and eligible students will be notified about the time and location of the exam. There will be only one alternative time.

The University Examination period in First Half Year 2010 is from June 7 to June 25, 2010. You are expected to present yourself for examination at the time and place designated in the University Examination Timetable. The timetable will be available in Draft form approximately eight weeks before the commencement of the examinations and in Final form approximately four weeks before the commencement of the examinations.

<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au/exam>

The only exception to not sitting an examination at the designated time is because of documented illness or unavoidable disruption. In these circumstances you may wish to consider applying for Special Consideration. Information about unavoidable disruption and the special consideration process is available at <http://www.reg.mq.edu.au/Forms/APSCon.pdf>

If a Supplementary Examination is granted as a result of the Special Consideration process, the examination will be scheduled after the conclusion of the official examination period.

Supplementary Examination in the Department of Psychology will be held on the: 8th and 9th of July, for Semester One 2010.

Supplementary Exams are only offered to students who have satisfactorily completed all other assessments for the unit and were unable to sit the final exam.

Instructions on applying for sitting of a supplementary exam are available from the website, [www.psy.mq.edu.au/specond](http://www.psy.mq.edu.au/specond). It is the student's responsibility to follow the steps outlined in this website. Students awarded a supplementary will NOT be sent a letter. It is the student's responsibility to check the web if a supplementary exam has been granted. Students who are granted to sit for a supplementary exam must make themselves available to sit for the supplementary exam on the specified dates. There will be only one alternative time. It is the student's responsibility to email the Psychology Office, [psy\\_off@psy.mq.edu.au](mailto:psy_off@psy.mq.edu.au) to confirm attendance to the supplementary exams.

You are advised that it is Macquarie University policy not to set early examinations for individuals or groups of students. All students are expected to ensure that they are available until the end of the teaching semester, which is the final day of the official examination period.

## **PLAGIARISM**

The University defines plagiarism in its rules: "Plagiarism involves using the work of another person and presenting it as one's own." Plagiarism is a serious breach of the University's rules and carries significant penalties. You must read the University's practices and procedures on plagiarism. These can be found in the *Handbook of Undergraduate Studies* or on the web at: <http://www.student.mq.edu.au/plagiarism/>

The policies and procedures explain what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, the procedures that will be taken in cases of suspected plagiarism, and the penalties if you are found guilty. Penalties may include a deduction of marks, failure in the unit, and/or referral to the University Discipline Committee.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICY ON GRADING**

Academic Senate has a set of guidelines for the achievement of grades across the range from fail to high distinction. Your final result will include one of these grades plus a standardised numerical grade (SNG). On occasion your raw mark for a unit (i.e., the total of your marks for each assessment item) may not be the same as the SNG which you receive. For more information please refer to the Macquarie University Handbook.

## **EXTENSIONS**

Requests for extensions for the written report are granted by the practicum / tutorial coordinator. Ordinarily, no extensions of written work will be granted since ample time for its preparation is provided. If an extension is required for medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may request this in writing but must include supporting documentary evidence (such as medical certificate, counsellor note, or

similar). All requests for extensions must be made prior to the due date for the assignment. Penalties will be levied for late submission of assignment (5% per day) and for exceeding the word limit (5%).

### **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

Macquarie University provides a range of academic student support services. Details of these services can be accessed at <http://www.student.mq.edu.au>.

On matters pertaining to the regulations, the Registrar's Office should be consulted or, within the Department of Psychology, Dr Julia Irwin, Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students with disabilities who have problems within the Department should consult Ms Radha Pathy, the Disability Liaison Officer. If your difficulties cannot be resolved by these members of staff you should consult the Head of Department.

If you have a major difficulty associated with writing skills, you could enrol in a short course on writing skills. For details go to:

[http://www.ling.mq.edu.au/support/writing\\_skills/index.htm](http://www.ling.mq.edu.au/support/writing_skills/index.htm)

### **APPEALS AGAINST GRADES**

Please refer to the Macquarie University Handbook.

